Progressive Calvinism

Copyright, 1955, by Progressive Calvinism League

VOLUME I APRIL, 1955 NUMBER 4

Contents

Page

Understanding and Misunderstanding
The Hebrew-Christian Law of Love 83

C. Scriptural Corrections of Popular
Errors Concerning Law Requiring
Brotherly Love 85

Explanation to Readers Regarding Contents of Current Issues

It is hardly practical to plan the contents of a monthly publication far in advance. When we began PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we did not plan to devote so much space in early issues to the *one* question of brotherly love as is actually being done. But, once enmeshed in the process of explaining our views on brotherly love, we have decided to devote the required space to completing the analysis. We shall complete the major presentation with the May issue. Thereafter, we hope to give this publication a more varied, and consequently a lighter, tone.

Published each month by the Progressive Calvinism League. Founders of the League: Frederick Nymeyer, John Van Mouwerik and Martin B. Nymeyer. Subscription price: $2.00 per year (for students, $1.00 per year); single copies, 50 cents. Address all subscriptions and communications to Progressive Calvinism League, 366 East 166th Street, South Holland, Illinois, U. S. A.

But in a larger sense we make no apology for this early concentration on one subject. We consider that there is a great evil which is steadily expanding, namely, certain ideas on morality and the social order which are destructive of society and human welfare. The pervasive evil to which we refer is the steadily expanding acceptance of the socialist-communist doctrine of brotherly love, namely, from each according to his ability to each according to his need. The arguments being advanced for it are alleged to be both (1) moral and Christian, and (2) scientific. We have a special interest in the alleged "scientific" grounds for a socialist-communist social order. A major portion of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM will *eventually* be devoted to analyzing in lay terms those "scientific" arguments. Those arguments will not be found to be "scientific" at all, but ridiculous confusion. But there is no great probability that a valid "scientific" argument against socialism-communism will be heeded, if the morality of socialism-communism is considered by the devout to be sound. Hence, we have concluded that, to open the minds of religious people to the scientific arguments against socialism, it is first necessary to show that there is no Christian, or Biblical, basis for the socialist-communist law of love.

It is, in fact, preposterous to believe that the "morality" of socialism-communism *can* be harmonized with the morality of the Christian religion. However, the best-known religious leaders in the Christian world today are endeavoring to do just that. And *basically* that is also what is being done in some so-called orthodox Calvinist (and other Christian) colleges and seminaries. We shall get down to cases later.

Those who claim the name of Christian, whether liberal or orthodox, and who disagree with socialism-communism only for one reason, because it is atheistic, and not because it is collectivistic, do Christianity a great disservice. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM disagrees with socialism-communism on two grounds, (1) because it is atheistic, *and* (2) because it is collectivistic, that is, because it teaches a vicious law of love.

Understanding and Misunderstanding The Hebrew-Christian Law of Love

(*The first instalment under this general title appeared in the February, 1955 issue of* PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM *with the subtitle*: "The Plain Teaching of Scripture Regarding Brotherly Love." *The second instalment appeared in the March, 1955 issue with the subtitle*: "Analytical Dissection of Scriptural Law of Brotherly Love." *After brief summaries the third instalment follows.*)

Summary of First Instalment

In the first instalment on the subject of brotherly love it was pointed out that the term *brotherly love** may mean one thing to one man and something else to another. One definition of brotherly love is that you must do as much for your neighbor as for yourself. A very different, and in fact conflicting, definition is that you should not harm your neighbor and should have goodwill toward him. The general idea advanced in this study of the Hebrew-Christian law of love is that the first definition just given is false and sanctimonious and un-Biblical, but that the second definition is sound and realistic and Biblical.

It was shown in the first instalment that Christians have shown themselves prone to adopting the first definition which is eventually always unworkable. Two idealistic, indisputable cases were cited, the early church in Jerusalem and the Puritans in New England.

Next it was shown that the *positive* law of brotherly love, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, is invariably defined in Scripture by saying that it refers to the last five Commandments of the Decalogue which are given in a *negative* form. Therefore, *basically,* the law requiring brotherly love is this: thou shalt not harm thy neighbor, that is, thou shalt not subject him to violence

*Used interchangeably with term *neighborly love*. Attention may be given later to distinctions between the two terms.

(sixth commandment), take his wife (seventh commandment), seize his property (eighth commandment), deceive him (ninth commandment), nor covet what is his (tenth commandment). As Paul wrote: "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: . . . Love *worketh no ill* to his neighbor." And so Paul declares that working no ill to the neighbor "is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8 and 10).

Summary of Second Instalment

In the second instalment it was shown: (1) that each person himself is the standard on how much to love the neighbor; the neighbor is not the standard; (2) that pursuing your self-regarding interests is meritorious; (3) that the pursuit of your self-regarding interests involves your individual and personal values and choices and wishes, and that you cannot pursue such interests if you do not have *freedom* in regard to those values and choices; and (4) that because freedom is *your* prerequisite to happiness and living the life of a human being, therefore your love to your neighbor is manifested by giving him the same freedom that you need, namely the right to pursue *his* individual and individualistic self-regarding interests.

It was next shown that the essence of sin in matters between man and man is that man is prone to pursue his self-regarding interests irresponsibly and in the easiest way, namely, by exploiting his neighbor. To make the point clear we cited the anecdote how Albert Jay Nock had his thinking illuminated by the idea to which he gave the name of Epstean's Law.

By various simple illustrations a re-oriented perspective on the Christian life, on relations of a man to his fellows, was given. The main objective of life is service to God but there is also the subsidiary objective of the happiness of man obtained not by exploiting the neighbor but by each man pursuing his self-regarding interests *without exploitation of the neighbor.*

Next it was shown that the other definition of brotherly love (the erroneous one that we should do as much for the neighbor as ourselves) is evil because it leads to and justifies (1) chaos,

(2) breeds violence and tyranny, and (3) promotes abominable human arrogance.

Finally it was shown that the Biblical definition presented as the Hebrew-Christian law of love was not to be identified with one indefensible form of individualism, namely, hedonism; nor with an inadequate form of individualism, namely, eudaemonism; nor with two malignant forms of collectivism, namely, utopias or socialism-communism.

We come now to the third instalment on brotherly love.

C. SCRIPTURAL CORRECTIONS OF POPULAR ERRORS CONCERNING LAW REQUIRING BROTHERLY LOVE

Objections By Well-Meaning Christians to the Correct Law of Brotherly Love

We believe that nothing in the first two instalments deviates from Scripture. Nothing has been added or subtracted from the *basic* law of brotherly love.

But what, it will be demanded, is now left of that wonderful and glorious doctrine of brotherly love — of charity, of self-sacrifice, of loving-kindness, of serving one another, of that wonderfully warm and glowing feeling of which the hymns speak, of that indefinable and mystical something that Christians call *love*! Or, as the theologians may wish to express it, what is left of *agape* (ag' a pe) the mutual love symbolized by the ancient love feast that preceded the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. (The character of the event was not always exemplary as is indicated in I Corinthians 11:20.)

The idea of agape love is ravishingly appealing to many people. But it is important to note that the idea of fervid, emotional attitudes from one to another is at best a high point in religion. It is not a sustained nor sustainable emotion or attitude or way of life. Obviously, it can be argued that it has its place; a crowd of young people who enjoy each other get together and have a fine time; a crowd of Christians get together and have a fine time; neither phenomena represents much that is tangible as

brotherly love; most people enjoy a crowd; most people like a sense of belonging. The subjective, emotional pleasure which comes from congregating together or of drinking too much together is not, we think, the essence of brotherly love.* (We may give further attention to agape love in some later issue.)

The major portion of this issue is devoted to adding to the *basic* definition of brotherly love several essential supplementary ideas which are clearly presented in Scripture. There is no relation between these added ideas and the general idea which many people designate as being agape love.

The definition already presented in instalments one and two would, it is believed, have been approximately complete, if there were no ethical sins in the world, that is, no wrongs between man and man, no inclination for a man to exploit and harm his fellow man. In a sinless world where the neighbor was suffering no exploitation and presumably had no unsatisfied needs (as the situation is usually presented!) and in which a man could spend his whole time for God, in such a world charity would be unnecessary, forebearance would be wholly unneeded, the gospel would not need to be preached, and there would not even be occasion for Lord's Suppers, or "feasts" beforehand as described in I Corinthians 11:21b, nor any of the apparatus of practical Christianity in the real world in which we live.

But men are not sinless and are not living in a sinless society, and so there can be no question that the definition of brotherly love presented up to this point is definitely incomplete and defective.

*It is hardly possible to treat of love wholly *subjectively* or wholly *objectively*. In this treatise we are treating *love* as something primarily objective and in the field of human action. But perforce it was necessary to treat it to a degree subjectively, as when discussing the *motivations* for action, motivations being subjective phenomena. Love has some *subjective* characteristics as compassion, mercy, etc. Those subjective phases are being reserved as largely outside the scope of this study. It is to the subjective phases that Nygren devoted special attention. We believe that the scriptural teaching on love is concerned primarily with the practical, objective manifestations of love.

What is added to the law of brotherly love in what follows is because sin is a reality in this world.

The Great Correction By Christ Regarding Ideas on Brotherly Love

Our original definition of brotherly love, on page 32 of the February 1955 issue read as follows: You (1) should not harm your neighbor and (2) should have goodwill toward him. In the two earlier instalments we covered the clause, *should not harm your neighbor;* in this instalment we shall cover the second clause, *should have goodwill towards him.*

In the time of Christ this idea of *goodwill* toward the neighbor had apparently been largely lost by a too-restrictive interpretation of the law by some of the Hebrew scribes. It appears that the prime purpose that Christ had in mind when he gave his well-known Sermon on the Mount was to correct misinterpretations of the law. He expressly declares "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: . . ." (Matthew 5:17-19a). The *law* then, according to Christ, was blemishless.

It follows, consequently, when he says in a whole series of parallel declarations, "Ye have heard that is was said to them of old time" . . . "but I say unto you . . . ," that he is correcting an incorrect *interpretation* of the law; he is not changing the law itself.

The incorrect interpretation which Christ was attacking was the interpretation that the law did not require goodwill to the neighbor. Apparently, the idea had become prevalent that the law of punishment could be applied mercilessly, vengefully, and with no beneficent intentions at all toward whoever violated the law of conduct. The law of love was obviously being quoted by

some as if it were a satisfactory justification for hatred and vengeance.

The Basic Declarations In The Sermon On The Mount

The relevant ideas in the Sermon on the Mount are summarized below.

1. First there are the Beatitudes praising humility; comforting the mournful; blessing the meek, the would-be righteous, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the steadfast, the loyal to Christ.

Some of the qualities which Christ approves and praises are primarily personal and subjective, as for example, humility, and mourning, and steadfastness and loyalty. But others relate definitely to relations between men, for example, meekness, mercifulness, pureness of heart, and peacemaking. Clearly, a kindly intention and a well-wishing to others is implied in meekness, showing mercy, intending no sexual wrong to the opposite sex, and in restoring peace among enemies.

But these Beatitudes do not declare that the neighbor on the grounds of his right to brotherly love has a claim on us or can demand something from us. If, according to the Beatitudes we exercise a virtue relative to him, the virtue is our forebearance and goodwill toward him and not our compliance because he originally had a valid claim on us.

On the ground of the requirement that brotherly love be exercised the violent have no *claim* for themselves on anybody's meekness; the wicked have no *claim* for themselves on the merciful; the lecherous have no *claim* for themselves on the chaste; the troublemakers have no *claim* for themselves on the peacemakers. That meekness, mercifulness, pureness of heart and peacemaking are virtuous does not mean that the *cause* making the exercise of those virtues necessary was a nonsinful cause. Quite the contrary is the case; the causes calling for the exercise of the virtues men-

tioned are always sinful causes; they are never rights or valid claims in themselves.

It is obvious that there is no statement in the Beatitudes which gives my neighbor a legitimate claim on what he may decide to want from me. What I give him is in fact not what he wants. He is violent; he wants my services or my property; I exercise meekness toward him. The reason for my meekness is not because I believe his claim on me is valid, and therefore I need have no sense of obligation whatever to grant his specific claim. But I do have the obligation to resist his intended evil *by a well-intentioned method of resistance, namely, meekness.* By my meekness, we are told, I shall win out; for the meek "shall inherit the earth."

There is, in short, nothing in the Beatitudes that legitimizes any original claim whatever by a neighbor. The requirement of goodwill by *A* towards *B* does not validate any wrong claim by *B* against *A*, but only requires *A* not to lose his feeling of goodwill to *B* even though *B* is on an evil course. But *A* will be wholly wrong if he becomes indifferent to *B*'s evil program, or compliant to it.

2. The section in Matthew 5:38-48 is vital to our analysis, and must obviously be treated carefully and in detail.

The text of this famous section of the Sermon on the Mount recommending, apparently, nonresistance to evil and even the aiding and abetting of evil reads as follows:

> Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
>
> Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love

> your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

An Eye for an Eye, and A Tooth for a Tooth

The passage just quoted begins with the famous words: "Ye have heard that is hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, resist not him that is evil; . . ."

What is wrong with "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth?" Nothing. And we are sure Christ did not mean that there was intrinsically anything wrong with it.

The ancient law called for an *equivalent* penalty for every crime as a deterrent against repetition or imitation of the crime. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). Many if not most devout Christians believe in the death penalty for murder. *All* ancient and modern civilized societies have been or are organized on the basis of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Two ideas, it appears reasonable, cannot be in dispute; one is, that the penalty for a crime must be a deterrent, and the second is, that the deterrent must be proportioned to the crime, that is, the deterrent must be equivalent to the crime, that is, not less painful.

No *stable* society of which we have knowledge *systematically* applies penalties to crimes which are less than the crime itself. No society, in our opinion, can exist in which murder is punished merely by admonition, or where rape is punished by one morning in jail.

The road which consists of penalties inadequately proportioned to the crime is the road to individual and social ruin. Eli,

the old judge, never got beyond saying to his wicked sons, "Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil doings by all this people. Nay my sons: for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" (I Samuel 2:23-25a). Where Eli failed, the Lord himself is interpreted to have stepped in and proportioned the penalty to the crimes; the disastrous end of the house of Eli is well known and need not be narrated. The moral of the story is this: if men will not restrain evil by equivalence of punishment, the Almighty will insure that the *full* punishment will be experienced through the general course of events. Scripture declares that God is not successfully mocked, that is, it is not possible to violate the commandments of God and not be punished either directly or indirectly.

The concepts of heaven and hell, of atonement and grace, are inescapably related to equivalence of penalty to crime.

The idea that Christ's objection to "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" consists in his objecting to the principle of equivalence of the penalty is irrational.

Further, the idea that the *deterrent* character of a penalty was not an essential concept, and that deterrence was not something to be sought after is also rejected. To deter a person from a repetition of a crime is so obviously good for him and good for society that it is not debatable.

The thought is sometimes advanced that the objection by Christ to "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" consisted therein that the old rule permitted *private* retaliation. It is then alleged that it is a better rule that the *state* should do the retaliating. That idea is also rejected as being too much on the periphery of the problem to warrant much attention. There may be something in it, but we consider it to be of minor significance.

But there are two extremely plausible and extremely important criticisms which Christ obviously had in mind when he dis-

paragingly quoted the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Those two important ideas are:

1. The moral law is not abrogated for *B* by the fact that the law had previously been violated against *B* by *A;* and
2. Even though ill-will prompted the crime, ill-will is not a legitimate ingredient in the application of the punishment.

These ideas are the real content of this section of the Sermon on the Mount and we undertake to outline them in detail.

The Break-Down of All Law

It is one thing to admit the general necessity of equivalence of punishment in proportion to the crime, but that does not justify the proposition that I may use violence against my neighbor *because* he has already employed violence against me.

If every time a man lies to his neighbor his neighbor may *therefore* lie to him; if every time a man steals from his neighbor his neighbor may *therefore* steal from him; if every time a man commits adultery his wife may *therefore* commit a compensatory adultery — if all that is true, then it follows that when one man breaks the law *therefore* another man may break the law. This says in effect that a man can paralyze or temporarily abrogate the law of God until he (the man) has "gotten even" with whoever has wronged him. In other words, the law of God would be temporarily shelved. All vengeance has that premise in its reasoning. That reasoning is erroneous. The law of God is *never* legitimately shelved.

All reasoning which declares or implies that because *A* broke the law of God therefore *B* can also do the same thing to *A* is a violation of the great principle of *forebearance*. Before we demand punishment *identical* to the crime we must forebear. We must ask: can the criminal be brought to contrition and restitution by a simpler and easier means than identical equivalence in the punishment, and can other potential criminals be deterred without recourse to identical equivalent punishment.

Without *forebearance* society is continually in the process of becoming chaotic. Any interpretation of the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is a wrong interpretation if it leaves out forebearance. That was what had been done in Christ's day; the law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was used as an excuse for, as a justification of, a ruthless demand to have eyes gouged out and teeth knocked out.

Forebearance can be defined in minimum terms as being tentative and temporary forgiveness. Having applied forebearance in that sense, and having obtained a gratifying result, the full definition of forebearance must be broad enough to include forgiveness in the unqualified sense of the term.

Ill-Will as an Ingredient of Punishment

The second and equally important objection to the demand of a wronged man that he be authorized to get an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is that he may be welcoming the opportunity for revenge. If ill-will prompted the original wrong, that does not justify ill-will in the punishment. If that were legitimate, the law of God would again be abrogated, paralyzed, shelved.

The obligation of goodwill to the neighbor, the obligation to wish him well for his sake and not to wish him harm, that obligation is timeless, boundless, and universal.

The obligation of goodwill from man to man is *never* abrogated.

The Amazing Doctrine Not To Resist Evil

We come now to the doctrine which appears to many as being one of the most astounding and contradictory doctrines in Scrip-

ture — the doctrine, not to resist evil (as expressed in the King James version). The exact words in the Revised Version are: "But I say unto you, *Resist not him that is evil";* and then follows the advice to turn to a wrongdoer the second cheek, give him your cloak too, and go with him a second mile.

On the face of it, this section of Scripture teaches that the neighbor does have a *claim* on me. If that is correct, then all that has previously been written in this analysis of brotherly love must collapse as erroneous; not only must you, apparently, live *for* your neighbor but you must tolerate violence (sixth commandment), theft (eighth commandment), and coercion (sixth commandment), against yourself by him, and you must encourage him in his evil conduct. Moses, it *seems,* was all wrong; he forbade harming the neighbor; here the neighbor, according to the New Testament, must be encouraged to trespass the commandments at your expense!

Merely to state the problem fully in that manner immediately brings urgently to the fore the necessity of a more-sensible explanation.

Nevertheless, the doctrine of nonresistance to evil has had some powerful advocates in the past, and has many powerful advocates today.

Leo Tolstoy, the Russian novelist, adopted as the central theme of his "religion" the doctrine: Resist not evil. He calls that doctrine the quintessence of the teachings of Christ. He declares all other Christian ideas must be interpreted in the light of that all-important and controlling statement.

We consider the Tolstoyan doctrine to be absurd. We do not believe Christ taught that it was the essence of brotherly love to tolerate evil and he certainly did not teach that it is meritorious to encourage evil.

Eli, to whom we have already referred, failed to resist the evil conduct of his two sons. God, speaking through the prophet, forecasted the ruin of Eli's house. All Scripture becomes an inconsistent mass of instruction if evil is not to be resisted.

The Aim, The Means, and the Motivation in Resisting Evil

When Christ made the famous statement, resist not him that is evil, he may have had in mind any one of three ideas:

1. Evil should not be resisted; this is a matter of *objective.*
2. Evil should not be resisted by improper or ineffective *means.*
3. Evil should not be resisted because of wrong *motivations.*

Without more ado the idea that the *objective* of the statement, resist not him that is evil, is to tolerate or encourage evil is rejected. Exactly the contrary is taken as the correct explanation, namely, evil is *not* to be tolerated or encouraged.

That leaves the question of *means* and *motivations.* The statement, when correctly understood in its context, means: Resist not him that is evil *by improper means nor from improper motivations.* Adding those two ideas, taken from the context, to the abbreviated statement, rationalizes it completely and easily.

The *means* which Christ advises are extraordinary and sagacious. He advises you to *advertise* your forebearance and that you be more-than-reasonable.

The use of more-than-reasonable means may appear nonsensical. But the advice, as wise and experienced people know, is excellent.

The controversies between men do not ordinarily involve physical violence. But bitter differences can poison the relations between men without a blow being struck. How judge between men in any controversy, and how should the contestants conduct themselves according to Christian ethics?

In a controversy, the natural tendency is for each contestant "to pull his own way." That is one reason why bystanders usually criticize both sides. They may grant that *B* has more right than

A, but they do not line up completely with *B*. His case may look impregnable to himself, but he may be the only person who believes it. *A* may even sincerely think *B* is wholly wrong. What is the wisest and shrewest policy for *B* to follow? It is for him to be more-than-reasonable. The way for *B* to get public opinion behind him is for him to be not only reasonable but more-than-reasonable. The way to frustrate an opponent is to make it clear that you are not fighting in an area where there may be a legitimate difference of opinion because of a difference of viewpoint, but that you are willing to go beyond that belt, far over into his territory, so that all the public standing around will finally say: Why, that man *A* was not only unreasonable but dishonest. My sympathies are now wholly with *B*. Look what *B* conceded.

The man who has public opinion behind him is greatly benefited. Somewhere in the Old Testament there is the statement that the righteous and the wise can afford to be magnanimous. It is not necessary for them to drive hard bargains.

Awareness of the importance of favorable public opinion is the hallmark of a wise man who intends to have a minimum of recourse to violence. A rich and aged farmer, half-soliloquizing with himself, has often said in the hearing of others, "I could have done that; I had it coming to me; but I am rich and they would have said I was taking advantage of him." That man is a "two-miler." And smart and shrewd.

Young men competitive with other young men as employees in a business often fail in magnanimity. They pull for themselves. They do not help their fellow young men. They may even surreptitiously trip them up. But the man whom the employer will finally promote is he that is the most reasonable, the most patient, the steadiest under insults and injuries, the young man who does not knife his fellows, but actually goes out of his way to help them. He is a "two-miler." It is the two-milers who get the promotions.

And when such a man is promoted, there is less envy and jealousy toward him about his promotion than any other man on the payroll. The others all say: "Well if I did not get it, I am glad he got it, because he is a decent guy." The reputation of

"decency" is only acquired by being more-than-reasonable, by being a "two-cheek" man.

But promote a young man who has always followed "the pulling for himself" policy and then hear the turmoil and see the disruption in the department!

After Moses died it was said of him that he was the "meekest" man of his generation. Does it mean that he was a weak man? Not at all. It means that he was the most patient, the most reasonable, the man with the most-reluctant recourse to violence—in short, the man who appeared to be turning his second cheek and going the second mile but who by that process was getting done what could not otherwise be done except by violence.

Patience, reasonableness, more-than-reasonableness, magnanimity are the most powerful *means* for accomplishing in a good society all legitimate ends that there are.

Looked at coldly and analytically those attributes are not related in any way whatever to letting your neighbor lord it over you. You are *not* making a *sacrifice.* You are instead a calculating and shrewd person selecting the most effective means to get done what you wish to get done. If eventually these means are ineffective, what then? Violence must *then* be employed to resist violence.

The weaker — and more wicked — a man is the more he will deviate from Christ's advice. In a *voluntary* society, that is, in a society organized according to the commandments of God, the principal reliance in relations between men will be on the devices which Christ was graphically recommending — forebearance, magnanimity, favorable public opinion, reasonableness and more-than-reasonableness.

It is necessary, however, to warn against "extending" Christ's statement, which is something practically everybody will do. The unwarranted "extension" will consist in this: if a man is wise to go a second mile, he is therefore by Christ advised to go the third mile or the tenth mile or the hundredth mile.

There may be some who reason in that manner, extending the interpretation beyond the statement. But we are strict constructionists and have developed an acute dislike for sanctimonious extensions of scriptural commands. To "extend" Christ's statement beyond what he said or apparently intended to say is to interpret him as recommending a course which will promote the growth of evil!

To extend the interpretation in an unlimited manner, just to be sure to impress the world with a Christian's piety, is also equivalent to making Christ say that resistance to evil *by force* is never permissible. This violates the teaching of Scripture generally and also of Christ generally.

It is one thing to advocate forebearance, to advocate trying to see a matter in dispute from the neighbor's viewpoint, to recommend being more-than-reasonable, to recommend advertising your Christian goodwill, but to say that Christ recommended that all resistance to evil should be limited absolutely to nonforceful means is to have him say something which, as we read the text, he most certainly does not say. In John 2:13-17 the incident is told how Christ horse-whipped the traders out of the temple. He deliberately used violence.

Further, if to the contrary that is what Christ was saying, then Christ was in disagreement with Moses. But in his introductory remarks Christ made clear that he was not disagreeing with Moses at all (nor specifically for that matter about resistance to evil or use of force to deter from evil); he was disagreeing with an interpretation about Moses's deterrent to evil which interpretation approved or encouraged a spontaneous, vengeful, identical retaliation, without attempt to use a forebearing and persuasive method.

* * *

Finally, there is the question of *motivation* and there appears to be good reason for believing that the main idea in the statement about not resisting him that is evil is that the *motivation* must be right.

An eye for an eye had been incorrectly interpreted as permitting a second violence to compensate for a first violence; as it were, a second lie to compensate for a first lie. The *means* to resist evil was thus incorrectly selected. But the motivation — what should the subjective movitation be when resisting evil?

The motivation, if we read the Sermon on the Mount correctly, must be unfailing, unalterable, undiminishable goodwill. The moment that the motivation has become ill-will, to damage the neighbor, to work him ill, to humiliate him, to deceive him, to rob him of the things that make life worth living, at that moment all formal compliance with the letter of the law, in regard to the application of suitable punishment, is still inadequate and sinful. Only when the purpose is *beneficent to the recipient* is the law of brotherly love, whether written by Moses or Christ, obeyed.

That this is the basic idea in verses 38 through 48 of the Sermon on the Mount is especially clear in verses 43 through 48. *Motivation* is directly discussed in these verses. Christ first says: "Ye have heard that it was said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, *and hate thine enemy.*" We do not know to what Old Testament Scripture passage Christ may have been referring. We infer that the clause, *and hate thine enemy,* was that wrong interpretation (not in Scripture) made by the so-called experts of the law. Then he goes on to advise, love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you. The import of the text is too obvious to require elaboration. It is simply this: the motivation of all brotherly relations must be goodwill.

We can then restate the abbreviated expression, resist not him that is evil, in this manner: resist not him that is evil by the use of improper means nor from motives of ill-will; or more positively and better: Resist evil by forebearance and with goodwill toward him that is evil.

The absurd interpretation of this text by Tolstoy and the pacifists is simply because they have failed to read the abbreviated statement in the sense obviously and completely determined by the context.

We can now add two important ideas to the *basic* law of brotherly love. The *basic* law is: love worketh *no ill* to his neighbor (Romans 13:10). Because sin entered the world it is necessary to have two additions: (1) forebearance and (2) a motivation consisting of goodwill. The two ideas of forebearance and a right motivation can be covered in that one word, goodwill. Brotherly love is, then, working no ill to the neighbor plus goodwill.

It should be noted that thus far there is no evidence that the neighbor has a *claim* on you according to his need and your ability (the socialist-communist law of love). That idea has not even been approached by anything that Christ said.

Charity

But our definition of brotherly love is not yet complete. It is necessary to add another idea to the definition. That idea is charity. Charity is referred to in the statement: give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

The idea of charity is taught in Scripture in two ways:

1. A pervasive teaching of the required universal payment of tithes, or a tenth of income annually, or occasionally of a tenth of all assets.

2. A spasmodic teaching that a man must dispose of everything, in one single act, for charity.

Let us consider the second idea first.

The *occasional* demand in Scripture for an act of charity involving 100 percent of a person's assets obviously cannot be a general rule. If it were a general rule it would swallow up the tithe idea entirely. The occasional rule is either the universal rule or it is a special rule. Without engaging in elaborate proof because the idea is logically so indisputable, the thought of 100 percent charity all of the time is rejected. To require 100 percent charity is to negate the right to property. One-hundred percent charity will prevent any property existing which can be stolen. Theft is impossible if the right of title to property is denied. Scripture nowhere questions the right of private property as between persons.

(The general idea that God is the ultimate owner is accepted, but that is wholly irrelevant in this discussion.)

When the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22) came to Christ, and was instructed to give up all his possessions, that must be taken as an exceptional case. The demand was not because his ownership of property was invalid and wrong. The young man was presented in his special case with a demand for the Kingdom of God and not for the poor. He flunked out because between his property and the Kingdom of God he would not give up his property. It was not the claim of the poor but the claim of God which he rejected. Christ by his adroit question brought out the evidence that the young man was unprepared to keep the *whole* law, the first table (to love God above all) as well as the second (to love the neighbor as himself). The young man loved himself (his property) more than he loved God.

The claim made on the young man was a special case. It is not the general case. There will always be such special cases. There are such special cases today. The responses in those special cases are individual. There is no validity in quoting the special case to establish the general case.

We come now to charity proper — the tithe — the universal case.

It is inappropriate and not practical to cover *all* phases of the subject of charity at this point. Instead a number of summary statements will be made:

1. The tithe is not properly invariably restricted to 10 percent; it probably should under specific circumstances be more than 10 percent (especially among the rich) and it may conceivably be less than 10 percent, although any facile appeal to the second idea should be appraised with suspicion.

2. The tithe can be looked on as a contribution to the unfortunate, and in that sense be strictly charity; or it can be looked at as an investment or far-sighted expenditure for self-regarding interests, such as, the general welfare or religious and educational services of which the person or his family or his friends are or will

be the beneficiaries. In this latter case the tithe is not really charity at all. We are not endeavoring to declare how much of any tithe money is strictly to be allocated to charity and how much to intangible but highly prized self-regarding interests, for example, money to your own church or school. Certainly, providing yourself with a church and a preacher is not charity.

3. Charity is never described in Scripture as a required payment to the lazy or the foolish or the unworthy poor. The demand for free and cheerful charity is for the benefit of the widows and orphans and weak and distressed. Nowhere in Scripture is a man declared to be obligated to help the wastrel or the lazy.

4. The need for charity falls into two fields. The one is wholly honorable, but the second is not. The first is the charity that is needed to cushion the blow of unpredictable misfortune; the second is the charity that is needed to cushion the effects of folly. A man marries. He has a family. Then he dies in a tornado. The widow and orphans need help. The charitable help is as honorable for the widow and orphans as were the earnings of the father. But another father may turn out to be improvident. At a given moment that improvident father and his family may become destitute. The destitution is the effect of folly. Although charity should not be performed to finance (and thereby encourage) folly, *in the emergency* there can be no question regarding the obligation to assist.

5. Assistance by means of charity is good for yourself, it is a manifestation of far-sighted judgment and a wise pursuit of the self-regarding interests. Usually, this is denied by implication by referring to promises of *direct* reward by God. We hold to the proposition that God works through logical and reasonable means. When then Malachi (Malachi 3:10) promises that the "windows of heaven" will pour down prosperity in response to paying the full tithe, it appears absurd to appraise that as illogical. The sensible interpretation is that it is smart to pay the tithe; for these reasons: (a) it pays to alleviate acute distress, such as starvation, illness, ignorance, incompetence, deterioration, which are all inevitable concomitants of failing to try to lift up the stricken and the unfortunate and the demoralized; it is well to

remember that "a stitch in time saves nine"; it is wise not to neglect disease of the social body any more than to neglect stomach ulcers or tuberculosis or diabetes; (b) you yourself, or your near kin, may also be hit unexpectedly by misfortune and temporarily collapse; if you do not help others so situated *now* they will have small urge to help you *when you are down;* the good Samaritan was a prudent man by being good; maybe he travelled the rough Jericho road regularly and feared he would be beaten and robbed and left to die; he probably hoped, it appears reasonable to believe, that somebody else would then do for him what he himself was doing for him "that fell among thieves"; it is, therefore, only the stupid who are hostile to charity. Charity is as necessary in society as grease in an automobile transmission.

6. Charity has a taint of disgrace to it. That disgrace belongs there when the need for charity is the result of folly. If distress because of folly is to be considered honorable then there is an inadequate deterrent to folly. That disgrace does not belong there when the need for charity was caused by the unpredictable, the "falling among thieves" on the wild Jericho road. But unfortunately the taint spreads to the whole field of charity, and not without reason did Christ say, it is more blessed to give than to receive. A person with pride who needs charity may earnestly wish to pay back. He cannot because of circumstances immediately pay back the specific benefactor; later the specific benefactor may not be around, or may be unwilling to accept repayment; (if he does accept repayment, he made a loan and did not engage in charity); and so "repayment" of real charity can only be to another person, a third party, who is hapless at the time. It is base social ingratitude for me to accept charity when I need it myself, but later to refuse to give it or give it only churlishly when another needs it. In other words, charity is a commonsense, realistic, profitable adjustment to social reality. But it sometimes hurts our pride to receive it. It should hurt our pride *only* when our need for charity is caused by something disgraceful and foolish.

7. Charity has a peculiarly subjective character. It is something that the giver decides and not the recipient. That is one reason why charity is always humbling. When you *buy* something *you* decide. *You* determine your own wishes and the fulfillment

of them. But charity always puts the giver in the position of deciding. He is the person who adjusts his means to his own needs and yours. He really does not consult you. He can calculate how much he should help you and how much others should help you. You are not a principal in the transaction; you are essentially a minor. As the recipient you may say: I need so and so, but the giver may say, you get only so much, because *B* and *C* and *D* need it more than you do. An essential phase of charity therefore is that the giver is the decider. The recipient does not declare a *claim*. The giver decides the gift. If charity were to be shown only toward those who are stricken by unpredictable providence, and never to those in unfortunate circumstances by their own folly, then the right of participation in the decision by the recipient would be clearer. But when charity *must* be dispensed *in emergencies* to the foolish as well as the unfortunate, the foolish certainly have no good claim in saying they demand so and so.

8. Charity, therefore, is essentially voluntary. The giver is a *giver*. He is not paying a debt. He is a giver because of both goodwill and good judgment. He has compassion for the recipient, and a long-view of the social benefits and the personal benefits of Biblical charity.

9. The expression, from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away, appears to be a reference to consumer loans and not to outright charity nor to a straight business transaction. If the reference is to the making of a loan to a distressed person (which appears probable) the basic concepts applicable to outright charity apply.

We summarize our definition thus far of brotherly love as: doing no harm to the neighbor, plus goodwill. And goodwill has up to this point the subsidiary definition of (1) forebearance, (2) general beneficent intent, and (3) standard Biblical charity.

There is, it should again be noted, in all this no allegation or implication in Scripture that the neighbor can clap his hand on your shoulder and say: "In the name of brotherly love give me your services or your wife or your property." He has no claim whatever to what is legitimately yours. You have no obligation

whatever to grant that demand on the alleged ground that Scripture teaches it. Scripture does not teach anything of the kind.

Being Debtors To All Men

A final and important idea must be added to the Biblical definition of brotherly love.

There is a well-known text in Romans 1:14: "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish." The writer, Paul of Tarsus, had been well educated, and the inference might be that Paul was saying he had learned something from practically everybody, Greeks and Barbarians, wise and foolish. But the text probably means something different, namely, that Paul considered himself obligated to everybody, Greek and Barbarian, wise and foolish, in regard to informing and urging upon them the Christian gospel.

The obligation to preach the gospel to all may be considered to be an obligation primarily to God and not to the neighbor. But the actual language says that Paul considered himself *obligated* to his *fellowmen,* that is, he considered himself a debtor.

The last addition, then, to the definition of brotherly love is the idea of informing the neighbor of the Christian gospel. It is not something which the possessor may withhold. The potential recipient does have a *claim* on that. He is a creditor; those who know the gospel are debtors.

In regard then to the intangible, spiritual good of which the gospel consists we are all debtors. We must engage in spreading the gospel whether we wish to or not.

Summary

The definition of brotherly love as defined in Scripture, as we understand it, has been completed. That definition consists of:

1. Doing no harm to the neighbor; not exploiting the neighbor; avoiding following Epstean's Law of looking out for ourselves *at the expense of the neighbor;* retaining freedom for ourselves and allowing freedom to our neighbors.

2. Manifesting goodwill to the neighbor
   (a) by forebearance and foregiveness — that is, not considering the law on brotherly love to be abrogated for ourselves because our neighbor has broken the law against us
   (b) by intending to do the neighbor good; by being motivated by what is thought to be his welfare
   (c) by extending charitable aid when needed
   (d) by informing the neighbor of the gospel.

That is considered to be brotherly love. Scripture teaches nothing more.

Texts Apparently Contrary To The Foregoing Definition of Brotherly Love

In the February issue the statement was made that the word love is *equivocal,* that is, that it has more than one meaning in Scripture and out of Scripture. Indeed, the word has a large number of shades of meaning.

A reader can get a Bible concordance and look up the word *love,* and then read all the texts in Scripture in which the word *love* appears. And then he may doctrinairely assert that brotherly love means something different from and much more than what has been defined in the foregoing.

It should immediately be granted that the love from God to men and the requirement of love from men to God is different from the requirement of love to the neighbor. If the two "loves" were identical, then Moses and Christ and his contemporaries should not have formulated *two* laws of love but only one. Any endeavor to interchange the two laws, although individual Bible texts may make that appear possible, is rejected as invalid; otherwise, why *two* laws?

Further, almost anything can be proved by individual texts. It is the *general* teaching of Scripture which should be determinative.

It should be emphasized that many texts on *love* get a very strange meaning if taken out of their context. In fact, when taken out of their context, some texts appear to say just the opposite of what they really say. (We have just gone over a classic example; it is tragically wrong to say as Tolstoy did that the statement, resist not him that is evil, should be taken literally and in isolation.)

It is not practical to consider all of the texts that might be cited as teaching a different definition of brotherly love than has been presented in the foregoing. But representative texts will be considered and commented on briefly.

When reviewing representative texts, we shall, in order to be consistent, analyze whether and how they teach or seem to teach, something different from brotherly love as defined in the foregoing; that is, do the texts teach (1) doing no ill to the neighbor and maximum freedom for everybody, (2) forebearance, (3) kindly intent, (4) charity and (5) proclamation of the gospel, *or do the texts teach something more, and if so, what.*

> *Galations 6:2.* Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

This seems to teach something more than brotherly love as it has been defined here. A socialist-communist or a Calvinist holding to a sanctimonious definition of brotherly love will say: clearly this text says that we must do *everything* for each other; *everything* must be communal; we must act as the early church in Jerusalem, we must sell houses and lands and "bear one another's burdens."

In actual life, with isolated exceptions, nobody does anything of the sort. And practically no professing Christian intends even in his high moments to do anything of the sort. It is sanctimonious prattle. It discredits Christianity to declare something that is hardly ever even intended.

But when the text is read in its context, what does it mean? It means something radically different from supporting each other. It means that we must be *forebearing* and forgiving to someone

who has fallen into sin, *exactly in accordance with the interpretation which we have given to brotherly love.* We must bear each others burdens, how? By *being forgiving.* Here is the *whole context.*

> Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor. For each man shall bear his own burden.

It is more unreasonable to quote, *bear ye one another's burdens,* as support for a sanctimonious definition of the law of love, than it is unreasonable to quote the last sentence, *for each man shall bear his own burden,* as proof that you should give nothing for charity!

* * *

Let us consider two texts together.

I Corinthians 10:24. Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good.

Romans 15:1-3. Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me.

Both of these texts can be made to appear to support a sanctimonious idea of brotherly love, namely, that the neighbor has a general claim on us. We appear to be admonished to neglect our own interest and to work solely for the neighbor, that is, 100 percent charity (or socialism-communism).

The texts in both cases really teach the exact opposite of what they *seem* to teach. They have been torn from their contexts.

The context in both cases refers to Christian liberty. Paul advises that we make certain concessions to brethren who are weak in the faith. In order to promote the weakling's faith, concede, he recommends, to certain restraints that the neighbor considers important. The purpose is to stabilize the neighbor's faith, that is, the purpose is purely spiritual, and pertains to the point we specifically acknowledged in our analysis, namely, we *must* make sacrifices for promoting the gospel. By no sensible exegesis can the conclusion be reached that we must order our lives according to the idea that our neighbor's whims must be our law — except in a limited number of *matters of faith,* as our eating meat dedicated to idols, which our neighbor with more feeble faith says we must not eat.

* * *

> *John 13:34,35.* A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

In this text Christ himself is speaking. When he refers to his love for his disciples as a universal standard he may be considered to be referring to two things: (1) his life up to that time; or (2) his atoning death. But that is impossible. He cannot be referring to his death. He uses the past tense. He must, therefore, be referring to his life up to that time.

A standard idea is that Christ did two things for his people, thereby fulfilling all righteousness, namely:

1. He bore the punishment for their sins; and

2. He fulfilled (kept) the law for them.

Christ's admonition, therefore, cannot mean that we must all try to die atoning deaths for each other. It must refer only to his keeping the law. The law is: thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, steal, lie nor covet; nor fail to be forebearing and forgiving; nor fail in charity; nor fail in concern regarding the salvation of our neighbor's soul. It was in all these matters that Christ had fulfilled the demands of love, and it was to these that he must have been referring when he made the statement quoted.

It is possible to give great emphasis to the single word, *new,* in the text. When that is done, the exegesis of the text will require the interpretation that Christ was stating a revolutionary law. Hitherto he had always declared he was in accord with the Old Testament. Now, at the approach of death he suddenly is said to put out a "new" law. That "new" law is proclaimed in one single sentence. It is not enlarged upon and it is not explained. The only explanation given is "as I have loved you." If Christ was the first who kept the law, is not that something *new?*

The newness of the law, it appears plausible, is not that the law is new and different, but the newness consisted in there finally having been a demonstration on how to keep the old law. Having finally obtained an actual pattern, the law of love could be declared by Christ to be something *new* to his disciples and to all mankind.

* * *

I Corinthians 13:1-13. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor,* and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love

> suffereth long, *and* is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall be done away; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love.

The foregoing is the famous Chapter 13 by Paul on love.

In Chapter 12 Paul had discussed the question of spiritual gifts — the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy, of healing, of working miracles. Apparently there was great rivalry and envy about those "gifts" in the church at Corinth. Goodwill and cooperation were in danger of being wholly lost. Paul uses an illustration of the parts of the body being necessary to each other. In short, he makes a powerful plea for cooperation and for mutual appreciation — in short, for mutual goodwill. He advises the Corinthians to grow up and rid themselves of childish rivalries.

That goodwill he calls "agape" or "love" or "charity." And what is it? Nothing more than "forebearance" and mutual appreciation and cooperation and "goodwill." His word "love" really does not mean more than

1. To stop disparaging each other
2. To be patient and gentle
3. To be modest
4. Not to be slanderous

And it all gets down to this: in regard to all those spiritual gifts what good are they if they cannot be used cooperatively, because there is no goodwill?

But what is there in this chapter that supports the idea that my neighbor has a broad claim on me to do as much for him as for myself? Nothing at all *unless the chapter is read out of the context.*

F. N.

* * *

The next issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM will be devoted primarily to a critical analysis of the "extension" by pious men of the Biblical definition of brotherly love to cover, erroneously, although in the name of freedom and of justice and of religion, personal and social relations, which are irreconcilable with what Scripture teaches about brotherly love. An *identical objective* of socialists-communists and of pious Christians will be exposed to be sanctimonious delusion which is destructive of human welfare and of society.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM LEAGUE
366 East 166th Street
South Holland, Illinois, U.S.A.

BULK RATE
U. S. Postag
PAID
SOUTH HOLLAND
Permit No. 1

POSTMASTER:
If change of address on file, notify us on Form 3547 (for which postage is guaranteed).
If not deliverable, check reason in spaces below. Return postage guaranteed.
☐ Returned at sender's request
☐ No such Post Office in state named
☐ Moved—left no address
☐ Refused
☐ Unclaimed or unknown